

# Politics, Proximity and Paranoia: The Evolution of Kashmir as a Nuclear Flashpoint

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NEW DELHI, March 21 (PTI)—President K.R.Narayanan today told US President Bill Clinton that India would defend itself against aggression and indiscriminate and well organised terrorism from across the borders and rejected as ‘alarmist descriptions’ American views that Kashmir is a ‘nuclear flashpoint.’<sup>1</sup>

The concept that the disputed province of Kashmir is somehow fundamentally connected with nuclear danger is pervasive in policy circles. A search of the internet for the phrase “‘Kashmir’ and ‘nuclear flashpoint’” brought up 998 separate references.<sup>2</sup> To many, this phrase is viewed as discriminatory or pejorative—an indication that the United States does not believe India and/or neighboring Pakistan are capable of managing nuclear weapons. Raja Mohan, a respected columnist and strategic analyst, notes that

Indian analysts of foreign affairs used to bristle every time a visiting American scholar or policy-maker mentioned the phrase that Kashmir is a ‘nuclear flashpoint.’

Not any more; since the Kargil crisis in 1999, the American concerns on the dangers of a ‘nuclear flashpoint’ in the subcontinent have worked against Pakistan and in India’s favour.<sup>3</sup>

This article will examine the relationship between Kashmir, nuclear weapons, and regional security. The analysis will be carried out in three sections. The first section will focus on the definition of a geopolitical flashpoint, assessing how Kashmir might fit that definition. The second section will briefly examine the development of nuclear capability in both India and Pakistan, as well as the interests of other nuclear-capable powers in the South Asian region. The third section will examine the evolution of Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint, trends in the Indo-Pakistani relationship, and possible futures.

Kashmir remains one of the most dangerous places in the world today.<sup>4</sup> A fourteen-year insurgency continues to rage in the province, supported both locally and by foreign assistance and volunteers. Border clashes between Indian and Pakistani forces remain a weekly, if not daily, ritual, and the infiltration of insurgents across the Line of Control has not stopped. International crises in 1990 and 2001/02, and a limited war between Pakistani and Indian regular forces in 1999, demonstrate that Kashmir remains an area of significant concern for regional and international security.

## What Is a “Flashpoint”?

The notion that certain geographic locations are critical to understanding international conflict dates back several millennia. The region of Israel/Palestine, for example, represents a key crossroads between Egyptian and Mesopotamian empires and cultures. Control of the Khyber Pass was considered fundamental for the protection of the Indian subcontinent. Britain considered threats to the Low Countries, particularly the port of Antwerp, to be a *casus belli* throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its guarantee of Belgian neutrality weighed heavily in its decision to intervene against Germany as late as 1914.

A brief examination of flashpoints in the twentieth century provides some useful concepts. The most important aspect of a flashpoint is that it represents a *recurring* or relatively constant focus of conflict. Locations which are only an object of conflict on a single occasion, with the results then being broadly accepted by all actors, are not, by definition, a flashpoint. A flashpoint, therefore, occurs as a result of an unresolved conflict and the existence of at least one dissatisfied state.

Flashpoints can be contested territory between two powers, like the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>5</sup> Flashpoints can be formed as a result of ideological differences, like Cuba and Berlin. They can be the results of partition, resulting from negotiations or conflict, like divided Ireland, divided Germany (during the cold war), Israel/Palestine, and divided Korea. Finally, a “nuclear” flashpoint must, by definition, be a region in which one or more of the actors and/or their coalition partners has access to nuclear weapons.

Significant flashpoints share certain elements in common with Kashmir. These elements can loosely be generalized as politics, proximity, and paranoia. Flashpoints, in essence, (1) must be at the forefront of a significant and long-standing political dispute, (2) tend to become greater concerns if they are proximate to both adversaries, and (3) are of greatest concern when they threaten to involve or engage more powerful actors in the international community, raising the possibility of escalation to a broader war. For conceptual purposes, these elements have been assessed separately, but the most important flashpoints in the international system, both historical and contemporary, usually result from a combination of these elements.

### Politics

States enter into conflict over disputed regions because they have real or symbolic value to both sides. At a minimum, both sides judge the region to be of sufficient value to threaten military action to promote their interests, and neither places a low enough value on the region to surrender it without a fight. The value of the object in this case could take many forms, but these forms can be loosely divided into fear (security), honor, and interest.<sup>6</sup>

*Fear* is a security-motivated concern, based on threat to the territorial integrity of the state, to the stability of a region or system of states, or perhaps to the state’s core values. As a result, it is not automatically quantifiable—fear is a perception. The value of a flashpoint may be easily perceived by others—the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel, for example, provide a substantial geographic barrier to Syrian efforts to advance

onto the Israeli coastal plain. Alsace-Lorraine represents a similar geographic buffer between France and Germany.

However, a flashpoint may also emerge as a result of the perception that the loss of that region would irreparably damage a state's position in a longer-term competition with an adversary—the loss of South Korea to Asian Communism (or, perhaps, to Chinese regional hegemony), for example. A region may also be inextricably linked with a state's vision of itself—its “national myth.” Possession or loss of that location becomes a matter of security—an existential value—in addition to a matter of honor (see below), because the existence of the state is linked in the most fundamental terms to possession of the disputed territory. Alsace Lorraine in the 1870–1945 period, the concept of an *Eretz Israel* including the West Bank, and the belief by some in a 32-county Irish Republic are examples of this phenomenon.

Finally, fear is also magnified by recurring crises. The knowledge that a region is coveted by another power makes policymakers much more sensitive to potential threats. Any time political tensions increase between the two adversaries, the disputed region will be a focus of attention on both sides, and the possessor will fear invasion or interference by its adversary. This phenomenon leads to increased risk of escalation—deliberate, accidental, or as a result of misperception.

*Honor* constitutes a crucial variable in international politics, and also is fundamental in understanding the nature of flashpoints. National honor is codified in the Westphalian concept of sovereignty—a theoretical commitment by the international system to the territorial integrity of states and to non-interference in domestic affairs.<sup>7</sup> Territory is considered one of the fundamental assets of the state, and a crucial attribute of power in an anarchic international system. A commitment to Westphalian norms makes voluntary concession of territory to an adversary an extraordinary event. This concession usually only comes about as the result of successful coercion or compellence.

Honor has other elements beyond sovereignty, of course. States frequently wage war in support of international commitments—the looming war, at time of writing, in Iraq is a response at least in part to Iraq's failure to live up to international commitments made in 1991. States also make alliances, and wage wars in support of their allies. Defense of an ally is, to some extent, an affair of honor—the longer-term ramifications of failure to support an ally could also be dangerous to national interest (see below). Similarly, in long-term ideological disputes like the cold war, states may be motivated in part by honor to intervene on behalf of a like-minded regime when it is threatened by an adversary, or to pressure a state that has been lost—Cuba, for example.

*Interest* can be measured in a multitude of ways, but perhaps the most important is economic. Flashpoints might possess vital resources of economic or military value—the divided Rumaila oilfields between Iraq and Kuwait, for example.<sup>8</sup> They can also be buffer zones or crossing points between hostile states or coalitions or forward bases for operations against adversaries. Domestic politics can also create interests, as can perception of historical trends. South Korea, for example, moved from a peripheral interest to a major flashpoint in early 1950, at least in part because domestic pressure after the “fall” of China to Communism created new incentives for combating aggression in Asia.

### Proximity

Geographic proximity increases the probability that a location will become a recurring scene of dispute. Hence, in Berlin, contiguous with East Germany and relatively close to West Germany, crises occurred relatively more frequently than in Cuba, even though both were the scene of significant nuclear-related crises. Alsace and Lorraine, located physically between Germany and France, and sharing cultural and linguistic roots with both states, became a pivotal region in European warfare for almost a century.

Partition creates proximity, in addition to other motives for conflict. Contested territory, as a result of partition, tends to be on the borders of the competing states. Partition or arbitrary boundaries can also create geographically indefensible borders, increasing motivations for conflict. The town of Crossmaglen was gerrymandered into the province of Northern Ireland, despite its geographical contiguity with a range of hills in County Monaghan (part of the then-Irish Free State). This creates a situation where it is easier to move to Crossmaglen from the south, across an international border, than it is to move from within Northern Ireland. This geographic condition contributed heavily to Crossmaglen's status as a Provisional IRA stronghold from 1970 to 2000. The entire region, in fact, was often referred to as "bandit country" because of the large portion of Catholics in the border area who were sympathetic to the IRA.

Proximity also contributes to the nature of conflict in these regions. The cost of war between states remains very high, and most states remain unwilling to authorize conventional war except in the most extreme circumstances. However, proximity and divided loyalties within some regions create opportunities for unconventional warfare, also referred to as low-intensity conflict. Insurgent groups can operate in the territory of the adversary, hoping either to generate public support or simply to cause harm, and then retreat across a national border in order to escape retribution. These insurgents may be actively supported by the neighboring government—the Sandinista government of Nicaragua supported El Salvador's FMLN insurgency in the 1980s. They could be used as proxy forces by a foreign power, as the *contra* forces warring against the Sandinistas were used by the US, supported out of Honduras. In some cases, insurgents may threaten to replace the government of a neighboring state, as the PLO did in Jordan and Lebanon. Finally, some non-state actors receive local support and sympathy from citizens of a neighbor state, even though that government opposes their actions—the Provisional IRA is an example of this phenomenon.

### Paranoia

The final element necessary to define a flashpoint is significant international concern—perhaps paranoia is too strong a word, but as indicated above many South Asian analysts find international concern over Kashmir to be excessive. This concern or attention can be generated from a variety of sources. The first, and most obvious, is the fear that limited conflict in a location will escalate into a broader war. In this case, the example of Crossmaglen used above does *not* fit into the definition of a flashpoint. Although this area of the Irish-Northern Ireland border has been repeatedly utilized by the IRA, the

international community and great powers do not believe that this insurgency will lead to a war between the military forces of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

A second source of international concern would be the potential collapse of an alliance or an international security organization. Here, for example, the threat that Cyprus might lead to Greco-Turkish military conflict and a resulting threat to NATO made Cyprus a potential flashpoint.

A third source of international concern would be the potential for outside powers—great powers or perhaps superpowers—to become entangled in a regional war that could adversely affect international stability or security. In the nineteenth century, conflicts in northwest India, Afghanistan, and Persia always raised the potential for Russian interference. The possibility of escalation—from a local to a regional conflict, or from a regional conflict to a global conflict—represents a major factor in defining a region as a flashpoint.<sup>9</sup>

Flashpoints, to conclude, are areas of recurring international conflict. Their political geography makes them focal points for various types of violent conflict, and the relative political value of these areas make them prone to political-military crises. These crises not only engage neighboring adversaries, but also raise the possibility of outside intervention with destabilizing impact on regional or international systems. Nuclear flashpoints also raise the risk of nuclear escalation, again on a regional or international scale, and therefore by definition at least one of the adversaries must possess nuclear weapons, or the possibility for intervention by outside nuclear powers must exist.

### *Kashmir as a Geopolitical Flashpoint*

The Kashmir conflict fits this general definition rather neatly. As discussed elsewhere in this volume, Kashmir symbolizes both Indian and Pakistani national myths, and therefore for some elites control over the region constitutes an existential security concern.<sup>10</sup> Both India and Pakistan also hold closely to Westphalian norms of sovereignty and territorial control, and compromise on the Kashmir issue remains elusive.<sup>11</sup> Kashmir figured prominently in Indo-Pakistani wars fought in the 1940s, the 1960s, and the 1990s, demonstrating the recurring importance of the region in bilateral relations.

Kashmir is also, of course, a product of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, and the ethnic and religious issues surrounding that partition. As such, portions of the population have divided loyalties, leading to significant civil disturbances in the 1960s and more recently in the 1989–2003 period. Non-state actors pose a serious threat to Indian political control in the region. Pakistan used the existence of separatist tensions to start a fully fledged war—the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war. It also used the existence of separatist support to attempt to infiltrate regular troops across the line of control in 1965—“Operation Gibraltar”—and 1999—the Kargil war. Finally, Pakistan continues to provide sanctuary, support, and training for both local Kashmiri insurgents and for foreign elements interested in supporting Kashmir separatism.

International attention focuses on Kashmir episodically, but with increasing concern since the 1980s. The Kashmir issue emerges periodically at the United Nations, which despite a series of resolutions has been unable to resolve the dispute. Pakistan continues to attempt to gain the support of the international Islamic community for its claims on Kashmir—support that remains tepid and ineffectual except for some extremist groups.

The Commonwealth has also been unable to help India and Pakistan resolve their differences.

Great powers also play a role in the Kashmir dispute. Partition was the direct result of British decisions, and the British government bears some responsibility for the outcome. Pakistan became a cold war ally of the United States, and was the recipient of considerable US military assistance and training. After a decade-long rift, Pakistan again became a valued ally in the 1980s, during the brutal Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Most recently, the US and Pakistan agreed to cooperate in the war on terrorism.

India, while technically non-aligned throughout the cold war, drifted significantly toward the Soviet camp in the 1970s. A Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union contained a passage committing both sides to "consultation" in the event of a conflict, and Soviet and Russian arms continue to provide the vast majority of Indian military equipment even today. Soviet veto power in the UN Security Council provided India with significant freedom of action in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war, which culminated in the liberation of Bangladesh.

China also remains an important player in regional security relations. While a repetition of the humiliating defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war is unlikely, the unresolved border between India and China remains a possible flashpoint in its own right. China has also, since 1962, maintained close political and military connections with Pakistan. Chinese intervention was a priority for Pakistan and an Indian strategic concern in 1965, 1971, and 1999, although China refrained from military involvement on each occasion.

Kashmir, therefore, became a nuclear flashpoint as early as 1965, due to the interests of the United States (a nuclear superpower) and China (an emerging regional nuclear player). India's detonation of a nuclear "device" in 1974 turned each future Indo-Pakistani confrontation into a potential nuclear conflict. Pakistan accelerated its own nuclear program, and by the early 1980s was widely suspected of possessing nuclear weapons. The next section will, briefly, examine the rationale and development of nuclear capability by both sides, and the impact these weapons had on subsequent crises in Kashmir and neighboring regions.

## South Asian Nuclear Capability

### *India*

India's nuclear program dates back to the late 1940s, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his chief science advisor, Homi Bhabha, began an ambitious dual-use nuclear energy program that would provide for India's energy and, if necessary, security needs.<sup>12</sup> The program has been largely removed from public scrutiny, although occasional crises have brought the debate to the public eye. Decisions on the nuclear issue were made by the Prime Minister and a handful of advisors, none of whom were military officers, resulting in an idealistic, highly symbolic, and deeply secretive nuclear program.

Although Nehru preferred to pursue policies which would lead to a more just and peaceful international system, the colonial experience left him wary of Indian vulnerabilities. Nuclear energy represented the highest echelons of science and

technology in the 1940s and 1950s, and also offered dual-use capabilities—the same establishment that pursued nuclear energy could also, if necessary, create nuclear weapons. The achievements of the Indian nuclear program were formidable, although Bhabha reportedly exaggerated the rate of progress and potential in both energy and weapons developments. By the mid-1960s, after the death of Nehru and Bhabha, India was in a position to respond to China's 1964 Lop Nor nuclear tests within a reasonable interval. Efforts to find a foreign nuclear guarantee were unsuccessful, and the drafting of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) threatened to foreclose India's nuclear option. Nevertheless, India chose not to test a nuclear device until 1974.

India's first test was announced as a peaceful nuclear explosion—an effort to take advantage of a loophole in the NPT.<sup>13</sup> Attacked for violation of a treaty it had not formally signed, India argued that it would not be denied access to the most technologically advanced weapons in the international system—a position it later referred to as “nuclear apartheid.”<sup>14</sup> The 1974 nuclear test took place during a period of domestic political strain, and clearly was intended both for domestic appeal and as a symbol of international strength. However, India did not choose to pursue its nuclear option—no further tests were ordered, and no weaponization took place. In later years, Indian prime ministers chose to authorize and then cancel a nuclear test in 1982, to begin work on a series of land-based missiles as a potential delivery system in 1983, and to authorize advanced weapons designs but *not* to test them in 1986.

By 1994, India was widely acknowledged to have nuclear capability, but in the form of a “recessed” or “opaque” deterrent. The end of the cold war, and a renewed US commitment to nonproliferation, also changed India's political calculus—the emergence of growing support for an indefinite extension of the Nonproliferation Treaty and the possibility of additional sanctions under the Entry into Force provisions of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.<sup>15</sup> The result was a gradual shift from satisfaction with the symbolic nature of an opaque force to increased pressure among elites for a test or series of tests to confirm Indian weapons designs.<sup>16</sup> Tests were authorized and cancelled in 1995 after US satellite detection, authorized under the brief Vajpayee government of 1996, and finally took place shortly after a new BJP-led coalition took power in 1998.

India's strong tradition of civilian dominance of civil-military relations has largely isolated nuclear debates from professional military advice.<sup>17</sup> Indian officers wrote about the possible need for a nuclear program as early as the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> The former Chief of Army Staff, General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, became one of the foremost proponents of a nuclear program in the 1980s. It was not until 1988, however, that the then-Chief of Staff of the Indian air force and a small cadre of air force officers independently initiated notional planning for a nuclear force.<sup>19</sup> India created an “opaque” nuclear posture—gradually acquiring all of the hardware elements necessary for a nuclear arsenal. The “software” side—doctrine, command and control, formal lines of authority, and military planning—was neglected, or at least not formally prioritized, even under the leadership of General Sundarji.

India's nuclear debates have been dominated by a succession of political leaders and by the scientific community dedicated to the development of the nuclear program.<sup>20</sup> Development of nuclear weapons demonstrates advanced technological and scientific capacity, symbolizes the strength of the Indian state and civilization, and fulfills a primarily political function in deterring possible hostile acts by outside powers. Indian

analysts and policymakers point primarily to China as a rationale for Indian nuclear policy.<sup>21</sup> Sino-Indian relations have improved substantially since the 1962 Himalayan war, and China has shown little interest in expanded confrontation with India.<sup>22</sup> The ongoing political conflict with Pakistan represents the most likely threat of physical invasion, but this is a scenario that India has proven itself capable of handling easily well short of the nuclear threshold. Given the relative lack of significant military threat, and the absence of military advice, it is hardly surprising that India “muddled through” with a series of nuclear policies (one can hardly call them doctrines) that appear highly idealistic. India carried out no systematic planning for utilizing nuclear weapons, for their command and control, or for operating in a nuclear environment, until after the May 1998 tests.

### *Pakistan*

The driving factor behind Pakistan’s nuclear capability is the perceived threat from India.<sup>23</sup> A peaceful nuclear research program was initiated in the 1950s, but it was not until the 1960s that a civilian—Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—made the nuclear program a national issue. Bhutto saw the nuclear weapon as a substitute for failed alliances with the US, as a symbolic counterweight to India’s much larger and more advanced nuclear program, and as a means of undercutting the domestic political power of the Pakistani army.<sup>24</sup> The nuclear program also provided a potential means of securing greater political and economic support from the Islamic world. In this respect, it was linked with Pakistani foreign policy and the Kashmir question at an early date.

The program accelerated after the disastrous 1971 war with India, which demonstrated Pakistan’s inability to defeat India conventionally, and particularly after India’s nuclear test in 1974. When General Zia-ul-Haq deposed Bhutto in a 1977 coup, the nuclear program was put firmly under military control. It quickly became a fixation in the Indo-Pakistani relationship as well as an irritant to the renewed US-Pakistani partnership against the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup>

Pakistan’s nuclear program was enabled by a combination of espionage, foreign assistance, and international circumstance.<sup>26</sup> The US requirement for Pakistani support in the Afghan war precluded serious attempts to stop the Pakistani nuclear program.<sup>27</sup> The leading Pakistani scientist involved in the nuclear weapons program, Dr. A.Q.Khan, stole design plans for Pakistan’s facilities from the Netherlands. Pakistan also benefited from Chinese assistance, reportedly including observation of Chinese nuclear tests at Lop Nor, support in a “cold test” of Pakistan’s weapons designs, and actual transfer of pre-tested designs for a missile warhead.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout this period, Pakistani nuclear doctrine and policy remained deliberately opaque and ill-defined. Leaders spoke openly of Pakistan’s nuclear capability when in opposition: Benazir Bhutto, for instance, reported that she had no control over Pakistan’s nuclear forces in the 1990 crisis.<sup>29</sup> Officials implied that the capacity to make nuclear weapons existed, but continued to officially deny the existence of actual weapons.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the most authoritative study of Pakistani nuclear doctrine emphasizes that no serious effort was made to develop either a doctrine or a secure command and control system until *after* the nuclear tests—even though Pakistan had been nuclear capable for a



decade.<sup>31</sup> Like India, therefore, Pakistan also followed a *laissez-faire* nuclear doctrine until after the tests forced more serious reconsideration.

## Kashmir as a Nuclear Flashpoint, 1984–2003

### *Quasi-Nuclear Crises*

Pakistan's growing nuclear potential, and the reactivation of the American alliance in the 1980s, created new opportunities for a favorable resolution of the Kashmir issue. Pakistan renewed efforts to bring Kashmir to the attention of international fora like the United Nations. It also became the major training area and sanctuary for Afghani resistance fighters, and for foreign nationals who came to wage *jihad* against the Soviet Union. The combination of more robust conventional forces (due to US military assistance), emerging nuclear capabilities, and growing expertise in managing insurgent forces allowed Pakistan to once again consider resolving the Kashmir issue through force.

Poor Indian governance laid the seeds for a local insurgency in 1989.<sup>32</sup> Pakistan capitalized immediately on the opportunity, providing bases, training, and logistic support for local insurgents, and for increasing numbers of foreign volunteers. Pakistan now concentrates on supporting the violence in Kashmir both to keep the issue in the forefront of the international community and also to create a prolonged attrition of Indian forces and resources, hoping that in time the Indians will give up and concede the region. Nuclear capability provides Pakistan with a means of deterring significant Indian conventional escalation and also with the ability to attract US intervention in crisis.

Nuclear crises in 1984, 1986/87, and 1990 brought troubling aspects of South Asia's new nuclear dimension to the attention of international observers. Events in the region gradually created the impression that the Indo-Pakistani border, and particularly the line of control in Kashmir, represented a potential nuclear flashpoint. The US-Pakistan link, the Sino-Pakistan relationship and continued Indo-Soviet cooperation raised the possibility, until the end of the cold war in 1989/91, that a regional conventional crisis could escalate to a regional nuclear problem, possibly involving external nuclear powers.

The combination of emerging Pakistani nuclear capabilities and increasing ethnic unrest in northwestern areas of India increased the probability of crisis. Indo-Israeli discussions on a possible preemptive strike on Pakistan's Kahuta weapons facility were reported in the early 1980s.<sup>33</sup> A crisis almost occurred in 1984 as a result of inadequate intelligence capabilities. The inability to locate key Indian air force units, deemed most capable of launching a successful preemptive strike, led Pakistan to move to a higher level of alert and conventional deployment.<sup>34</sup> Later that year, an explosion of Sikh separatism wracked the Indian province of Punjab, leading to a vicious insurgency that lasted almost a decade.

Mishandling of center-state and ethnic tensions in Punjab created an internal crisis for India. The election of Rajiv Gandhi with an overwhelming parliamentary majority in 1986 set the stage for a series of nuclear-related crises, and also marked a brief period of unprecedented Indian military adventurism. In 1986–87, India undertook a four-part series of military exercises called "Brasstacks"—exercises in which the mechanized forces of the Indian army carried out combined arms operations on an unprecedented

scale close to the Pakistani border.<sup>35</sup> The objective of these maneuvers remains unclear. It is possible that the Indian leadership—Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, and Deputy Minister for Defense Arun Singh—deliberately took India to the brink of preventive war. According to Indian reports, “Operation Trident”—the reconquest of the northern areas and Pakistan-held Kashmir, ordered at the height of the crisis—was called off less than two hours before it was scheduled to begin.<sup>36</sup>

If India’s intention was preventive war, the conditions were hardly ripe. Pakistan responded to the crisis forcefully and effectively. Pakistan’s armed forces had been modernized with US and Chinese help, so that even though India was in the midst of an unprecedented surge in military spending, the conventional military balance was fairly close. India was threatened by the increasing insurgency in Punjab—a threat that Pakistan leveraged by moving armored forces to threaten a counterstroke into that state at the height of the crisis. Finally, Pakistan was close to possessing nuclear weapons—a possibility that may have prompted India to consider preventive war, but which also raised the stakes substantially. The crisis ended abruptly, leading some analysts to suspect that the Indians moved to the brink of war and then blinked.

As the result of Indian misgovernance, an indigenous insurgency opened in Kashmir in the winter of 1989. This insurgency was seized upon by both political and military leaders in Pakistan. For Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the plight of Kashmiri Muslims became a domestic rallying factor. She harshly condemned Indian human rights violations, spoke out for Kashmiri self-determination, and made dangerous comments about fighting a thousand-year war with India if necessary. Opposition parties seized the opportunity as well, criticizing her lack of response and pushing domestic debate to the political extreme.<sup>37</sup> Most disturbingly, thirty training camps were established inside Pakistan, and Pakistani military and intelligence agencies provided support to the insurgents.<sup>38</sup>

India’s domestic political situation was also volatile. The new Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, hoped for better political relations with Pakistan, but this option was foreclosed by the Kashmir uprising and domestic criticism. The Kashmiri insurgency coincided with Indian and Pakistani winter military maneuvers, adding the threat of conventional escalation to an already volatile policy mix. Both India and Pakistan maintained forces in the region, although reportedly neither moved heavy armored formations—avoiding a repetition of Brastacks. The 1990 crisis reportedly included the actual deployment of Pakistani nuclear weapons to air bases, although this has been disputed by many of the key players in India, Pakistan, and the US.<sup>39</sup> Robert Gates, the Deputy National Security Advisor, rushed to the region to defuse what Washington believed amounted to a potential nuclear crisis. The “Gates Mission” in mid-May helped reassure both countries about military mobilization on their border, and delivered a harsh assessment of Pakistan’s ability to compete in either conventional or nuclear conflict to leaders in Islamabad. The Kashmir crisis was considered sufficiently volatile that President Bush and President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union issued a joint statement warning of the possible consequences of war in the region.<sup>40</sup> The Kashmir issue, in the eyes of the superpowers and the international community, had finally become irrevocably linked with nuclear weapons.

*“Real Nuclear Crises”—Kargil and the War on Terrorism*

On May 11, 1998, India simultaneously detonated three separate nuclear devices—one reportedly a thermonuclear device, one a roughly Hiroshima-sized fission device, and the third a miniaturized, subkiloton device.<sup>41</sup> Two days later, India staged two more tests of subkiloton devices. One of the subkiloton devices reportedly used a reactor-grade, rather than the purer weapons-grade, mix of plutonium.<sup>42</sup> The nuclear tests met with nearly universal approval within India, where polls suggested over 90% of the public supported the tests, and significant disapproval in the international community, which condemned the tests and imposed economic sanctions on India.

On May 28, 1998, after over two weeks of intense diplomatic activity, Pakistan also tested nuclear devices. The number of tests is still contested—Pakistani authorities claimed five, but other analysts remain unconvinced.<sup>43</sup> Two days later, on May 30, Pakistan tested another device, which it announced was “miniaturized,” and some reports state that another device was left unexploded in a shaft. The yields of both Indian and Pakistani tests remain disputed, but seismic evidence unquestionably confirms that both states detonated nuclear weapons.<sup>44</sup>

In the eyes of many analysts, the 1998 nuclear tests, and more importantly Pakistan’s prompt counter-tests, actually degraded Indian security in the near-term. The overt demonstration of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent increased international attention to the region and the Kashmir issue. India assumed that the presence of nuclear weapons led to stability and peace, and initiated the Lahore peace process. Pakistan, however, took advantage of the “stability-instability” paradox brought about by the presence of nuclear deterrence—the notion that high-intensity conflict that might threaten the survival of states is deterred, but not lower level conflict.<sup>45</sup>

The value of nuclear weapons as “cover” for more aggressively pursuing Pakistani ambitions at lower levels of intensity was both recognized and publicly addressed. Indian *military* leadership recognized this possibility but it appears to have been largely rejected by Indian political elites.<sup>46</sup> According to the Indian Kargil Review Committee Report, as early as 1991 the Joint Intelligence Committee anticipated that Pakistan would use its nuclear capability to limit Indian conventional retaliation in event of low-intensity conflict.<sup>47</sup> Shortly before the Kargil operation was discovered, then Chief of Army Staff General Pervaiz Musharraf announced that while nuclear weapons had made large-scale conventional wars obsolete in the subcontinent, proxy wars were very likely.<sup>48</sup>

The Kargil war of 1999 was the first war in a nuclearized South Asia, and arguably the first real war between two nuclear states. Although nuclear weapons were not used, the nuclear issue unquestionably permeated the conflict. Nuclear tests by both states redefined the conflict in the eyes of both adversaries, driving changes in policy and objectives. Pakistan attempted, for reasons that are still unclear, to use military coercion against India, infiltrating about 2,000 regular and irregular troops over the Line of Control near Kargil.<sup>49</sup> This operation threatened the Srinagar-Leh highway—the primary route of both supply and transit for India in northern Kashmir, indirectly attacking Indian garrisons at Ladakh and Siachen Glacier. This operation would also provide substantial support for the insurgency in Kashmir, and draw off the attention of Indian security forces.

This attack on India, coming shortly after the historic Lahore Agreement, was viewed as base treachery by India and as outright aggression by the international community. Pakistan may have assumed that the threat of nuclear confrontation would spark rapid international diplomatic intervention—if so, it was incorrect. Both the US and China refused to support Pakistan, and the international community called for a prompt withdrawal.

Pakistan also misinterpreted India's willingness to defend the Kargil region. Although Pakistan crossed the Line of Control, rather than the international border, India interpreted this as an invasion of sovereign territory and responded swiftly and with massive force. Where Pakistan hoped, perhaps, to draw a parallel to India's occupation of Siachen glacier in the 1980s, both India and the international community interpreted this move as an invasion of Indian sovereign territory across an established border. Significantly, India did not escalate or expand the conflict by crossing the Line of Control or the border—a tactic India had first used in 1965.<sup>50</sup> In short, it appears that India was deterred from escalation—either vertical or horizontal—by Pakistan's nuclear capability.<sup>51</sup> According to reports, both India and Pakistan may have alerted and/or deployed nuclear weapons and delivery systems during the crisis.<sup>52</sup>

The Kargil experience contributed to significant changes in Indian nuclear and military doctrine. India's Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND), issued in August 1999, conveniently coincided with domestic political elections.<sup>53</sup> This doctrine was clearly the compromise of a number of different points of view regarding the size, potential targets, and utility of India's emerging nuclear arsenal. The DND articulated a need for a survivable second-strike force, but also suggested that, unlike the US-Soviet competition, retaliation did not need to be immediate—only assured. This would permit lower levels of readiness, and perhaps smaller nuclear forces, than the superpower competition. The DND also placed great emphasis on survivability—on deception, concealment, and mobility. It re-articulated India's commitment not to be the first state to use nuclear weapons.

In early 2000, Minister of Defense George Fernandes announced a new "limited war doctrine." This new doctrine recognized that there was a "strategic space" in which conventional combat could take place without triggering nuclear deterrence.<sup>54</sup> Both concepts aimed at denying the Pakistanis any advantage through the threat of nuclear escalation in the future.

Pakistan responded with public discussion of new command and control arrangements, ensuring that nuclear weapons would be closely controlled and readily available to military commanders in crisis.<sup>55</sup> The concept of limited war—the cornerstone of the Kargil operation—was publicly rejected by Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Abdus Sattar.<sup>56</sup> Pakistan continued to stress the danger of war, the aggressive policy of India against Kashmiri insurgents, and the importance of US assistance in resolving the Kashmir issue.<sup>57</sup> The failure of negotiations at Agra indicated the damage Kargil had done to the bilateral relationship.<sup>58</sup>

The December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament prompted an angry Indian response, including an unprecedented military buildup on the Indo-Pakistani border and the Line of Control in Kashmir. India also began a careful campaign to undermine confidence in Pakistan's nuclear deterrent. On December 25, 2001, Jana Krishnamurthy—President of the ruling BJP party—warned Pakistan that "its existence

itself would be wiped off the world map” if it attempted to use nuclear weapons.<sup>59</sup> Minister of Defense Fernandes stated that India would not be deterred by Pakistani nuclear threats, and that attacks on Indian troops would be treated as attacks on Indian soil on January 3, 2002.<sup>60</sup> Similar threats were echoed by Chief of Army Staff General Padmanabhan on January 11, 2002.<sup>61</sup> Given the limited role of the military in formulating nuclear policy, this clearly suggested that his statements were made at the behest of the government. The testing of the 700–800 km Agni-1 missile in January reinforced the idea that India had nuclear-capable forces postured for use against Pakistan.<sup>62</sup>

The response of the Indian government was a clear attempt at military coercion, utilizing the lessons learned from the Kargil conflict.<sup>63</sup> India initiated an unprecedented military buildup, calling formations from central and eastern India to the Pakistani border.<sup>64</sup> This included the positioning of three “strike corps,” each based around an armored division, to threaten strikes at major cities (Lahore) and the highway that links Lahore with the port city of Karachi.<sup>65</sup> Over a period of approximately 2–3 weeks, India moved hundreds of thousands of troops to forward positions at the Pakistani border, and began digging fortifications and laying minefields.<sup>66</sup> Large exercises testing warfighting capabilities in a nuclear battlefield were announced.<sup>67</sup> India even cancelled the Army Day parade as a signal of serious intent.<sup>68</sup> Indian reports state that the Indian air force and Indian commando forces were prepared to strike dozens of militant bases and several major military targets within two weeks after the December 13 attack.<sup>69</sup>

Ultimately, however, this vast mobilization of potential coercive force did not achieve concrete gains.<sup>70</sup> India’s public demands were relatively moderate—formulated so that they were easily met, but also easily avoided. India submitted a list of 20 terrorists that it wants Pakistan to hand over, but publicized the names in such a way that the targets could easily go into hiding.<sup>71</sup> India also demanded observable reductions in the infiltration of insurgents into Kashmir.<sup>72</sup> Infiltration, by its very nature, is difficult to determine, and Pakistan can plausibly claim that determined *jihadis* will make their way over the rugged LOC.

This limitation became obvious in May of 2002, when the crisis reemerged in an even more dangerous manner. Infiltration had not stopped, and the attack by terrorist forces on the Kaluchak barracks resulted in the deaths of dozens of innocent women and children.<sup>73</sup> India responded through a series of military acts, including the movement of strike corps, combining India’s Eastern and Western Fleets in the North Arabian Sea, and placing paramilitary forces in Jammu and Kashmir under formal military command, and reportedly preparing a series of military strikes before the monsoon season began in mid-June.<sup>74</sup>

Pakistan’s response clearly indicated the escalation of nuclear rhetoric in the region. In the May 25–28 period, Pakistan tested three nuclear capable ballistic missiles. On May 29, Munir Akram, Pakistan’s newly appointed Ambassador to the United Nations made the following statement: “So long as the use of force is outlawed, we will accept no first use of nuclear weapons also. But India should not have the license to kill with the use of conventional weapons while our hands are tied with regard to other means to defend ourselves.”<sup>75</sup> He further commented: “We do not wish to expend our limited resources on building up a conventional defence which will completely debilitate our development... We have to rely on means to deter Indian aggression. We have that means and we will not neutralise it by any doctrine of no first-use.”<sup>76</sup> Finally, Akram explicitly linked the

nuclear crisis with a international political intervention for a resolution of the Kashmir crisis. He also stated that Pakistan considered “punitive economic measures” to be a form of aggression that might justify nuclear retaliation.<sup>77</sup>

The 2002 crisis suggested two significant trends in the subcontinental nuclear relationship—the willingness of both states to rely increasingly on US intervention, and the more alarming assumption by some Indian analysts that the US would intervene to control Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal in crisis.

The use of strong nuclear rhetoric by both sides certainly creates an incentive for US involvement in a crisis. In India’s case, this is a significant reversal of cold war policy, when India attempted to isolate the region from external interference, and to balance potential US intervention by closer relations with the Soviet Union. In a nuclearized region and a unipolar international system, however, US involvement promises both a buffer against escalation and a third-party channel of communications in crisis.

Both states, therefore, attempt to manipulate the US perception of the Kashmir dispute, and both appear to put increasing emphasis on stimulating early US intervention. Pakistan emphasizes, and may actually exaggerate, its conventional weakness and its need to rely on early use of nuclear weapons as a means of preventing Indian movement across the LOC or border. India stresses Pakistan’s instability, unpredictability, and support for terrorism, and relies on increasingly open nuclear rhetoric to remind the US of the danger in the region. Both approaches increase US fears of nuclear escalation, by accident, unauthorized use, or misperception, in a future crisis. Both states, however, have also been exposed to the limitations of the US role. Pakistan relied on US support in the Kargil war, and was rudely disappointed. India hoped for significant support at the height of the Kalachak crisis, and was surprised by the US recommendation to evacuate all non-essential personnel and all US civilians from India and Pakistan in late May, 2002.<sup>78</sup>

A second, and more disturbing, trend is the increasing discussion of a possible US preemptive role to prevent Pakistan’s use of nuclear weapons in a crisis. This issue was raised dramatically shortly after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 in an article by investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, claiming that the US was training with an Israeli special forces unit to seize control of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.<sup>79</sup> This report was repudiated by none other than President George W. Bush in a telephone conversation with President Musharraf, where he reportedly stated that “Seymour Hersh is a liar.”<sup>80</sup> However, some Indian analysts continue to believe that the US can and will intervene in a crisis, seizing control of Pakistani nuclear assets in a definitive combination of preemption and escalation control.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the possibility—particularly in response to a seizure of power or assets by non-state actors or *jihadists*—continues to be a concern.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusions

Kashmir remains a nuclear flashpoint. In fact, all of the different articles in this collection support that conclusion. The political factors that create the basis for continued crises—Pakistan’s intransigence and India’s inability to manage an internal resolution—show no signs of abating.<sup>83</sup> The problems caused by proximity, in terms of ease of infiltration

across the LOC and the expansion of terrorist attacks to neighboring regions of India like the New Delhi attack of December 13, 2001, cannot be resolved short of a comprehensive political solution.<sup>84</sup> The role of external powers remains fundamental in conflict management in the region. The paranoia demonstrated by both China and the US regarding possible conflict escalation in the region encourages both India and Pakistan to attempt to manipulate them for local advantage.<sup>85</sup>

The nuclear lessons of Kargil and the 2002 crisis have not yet been fully assimilated, but it appears that both sides are moving away from previous policies of recessed deterrence. India's nuclear capability and policy is moving, slowly but perceptibly, in pursuit of the ability to wage limited conventional wars in a nuclear environment, to dominate escalation in the event of a conflict, and to create a legitimate, usable and survivable nuclear force that can exercise military options in order to enhance deterrence.<sup>86</sup> In short, India is following a path similar to those of the superpowers during the 1950s, although the pace remains slow and the trajectory could change given significant political direction.<sup>87</sup>

However, Indian military leaders have emphasized India's shrinking relative conventional advantage over Pakistan, despite the vast imbalance in military spending.<sup>88</sup> India's renewed interest in preemptive strategies and doctrines, spurred by the new US National Security Strategy and the recent war on Iraq, may suffer from an absence of adequate conventional resources.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that Pakistan may be able to continue to exploit the Kashmir issue in the near future, and that India may be relatively more reliant on nuclear rhetoric and threats.<sup>90</sup>

Pakistan has also revised its perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent. Kargil demonstrated the limitations of the stability-instability paradox, particularly at a time when the international community rejects the notion of terrorism, of redefining borders through force, and views South Asia as an extremely likely, if not the most likely, location of a nuclear war in the future. Pakistan has had to detail a set of potential nuclear red lines in order to limit India's conventional options in limited war.<sup>91</sup> These guidelines include significant losses of territory, destruction of large parts of the army or air force, efforts at economic strangulation including controlling the flow of the Indus waters or sea blockade, and significant Indian support for domestic destabilization in Pakistan. Pakistani command and control procedures have also shifted to ensure that the weapons can be quickly devolved to operational military control, and will be easily used in a crisis.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Pakistani nuclear doctrine appears to be based on a policy of deliberate vulnerability and instability, aimed to convince India and the US that any escalation to the conventional level might lead immediately to a nuclear response.<sup>93</sup>

The continuing conflict in Kashmir and on the LOC virtually ensures that pressure for higher levels of alert and relatively more traditional forms of nuclear deployment—including larger arsenals and more careful military planning regarding nuclear weapons use—will increase, as both sides alter their doctrines and forces to adjust to changing realities.<sup>94</sup> This does not mean that nuclear war is inevitable, any more than it did in the cold war. However, the position of nuclear optimists—South Asian and Western alike—that no nuclear powers will ever fight a war has been substantially undermined by the Kargil experience. What some analysts have referred to as an “arms crawl” in the subcontinent is now turning into an “arms lurch”—quicker, less predictable, and relatively more capable of causing harm to both sides.

Kashmir remains the most likely arena of conflict between India and Pakistan, due to the religious, historical, political, and symbolic importance of the region to both sides. It remains highly militarized, and while there is some indication that the indigenous population is tired of the conflict, it remains relatively easy and inexpensive for Pakistan to bolster the insurgency with outside “volunteers.” Pakistani military and intelligence support for infiltration continues, despite commitments to both the US and Indian governments, and therefore the risk of escalation to more formal conventional conflict remains real.<sup>95</sup>

Kashmir is now more important than ever in the eyes of the international community. In the new environment of the twenty-first century war on terrorism, relations between Islam and other religions and cultures take on a particular sensitivity. Opponents of the US point to its positive relations with both Israel and India—both states which, in the eyes of many in the Islamic world, are actively engaged in repressing Muslims. The importance of Pakistan to US efforts in the war on terror, although waning slightly after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, remains high, particularly as Al Qaeda and Taliban refugees flood into Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Provinces, and engage in terrorist acts against both the Musharraf regime and against foreigners and Christians in Pakistan itself. Al Qaeda fighters have been reported as active on both sides of the LOC. These unpleasant facts increase the risk of unauthorized use, and US concerns for escalation.

Acts of terror have sparked both the war on terrorism itself and the last two Indo-Pakistani nuclear crises. Only the most sanguine and idealistic observers of the subcontinent could believe that another crisis is unlikely—in fact, recent rhetoric between India and Pakistan has again emphasized the nuclear nature of their conflict, and diplomatic staffs in their respective embassies have been reduced by approximately 60%.<sup>96</sup> The US actively seeks better relations with both states, but can neither resolve the Kashmir dispute—despite efforts by both sides to enlist US support for their respective positions—nor ignore it. The apparently irreconcilable differences between the two states, Kashmir’s location—both geographic and symbolic, as a crucial element of each state’s identity—and the US and international community’s concern over crisis escalation remain unchanged. The three key factors of politics, proximity, and paranoia drive the inescapable reality that Kashmir will remain a nuclear flashpoint for the foreseeable future.

## NOTES

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The views and analysis expressed in this article are the author’s own, and do not represent the policy of the US Navy, the Department of Defense, or any other agency of the United States government.



1. Press Trust of India, *The Tribune* on-line edition (March 22, 2000), "Narayanan—Kashmir No N-Flash Point", [www.tribuneindia.com/2000/20000322/nation.htm#1](http://www.tribuneindia.com/2000/20000322/nation.htm#1), accessed February 12, 2003.
2. Google search carried out February 12, 2003.
3. Raja Mohan, "Managing the 'Nuclear Flashpoint,'" *The Hindu*, December 17, 2001.
4. While the notion of Kashmir as the most dangerous place in the world may be hyperbole—particularly at the time of writing, when North Korea appears to have surpassed South Asia as the highest risk of nuclear confrontation—increasing Indo-Pakistani tension and the symbolic importance of Kashmir for political elites in both countries does create a serious risk.
5. Alsace and Lorraine were part of France until 1871, when they were ceded to the newly founded German empire after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. Recovery of the provinces became a crucial element of French foreign policy in the 1871–1914 period, a key objective of French war planning (including PLAN XVII utilized in August and September 1914), and a demand at the Versailles peace conference of 1919. They were later re-occupied by Nazi Germany after France's defeat in 1940, and liberated and reassigned to France in the campaign of 1944–45.
6. Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* describes the motives for war in terms of fear, honor, and interest (Book I: Verse 75, line 3). This text is the first major work in the Western tradition of international relations, and remains fundamental to the "realist" school of foreign policy even today.
7. For an interesting study of the importance of this issue in the developing world, see Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995). Ayoob argues that the developing world clings to Westphalian notions of sovereignty even as the developed world has begun to move beyond it. This notion is also intimately related to the debate over the international impact of globalization. Another excellent reading on this topic is Robert E. Harkavy and Stephanie G. Neuman, *Warfare and the Third World* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
8. The border between Iraq and Kuwait is drawn through the middle of these oilfields. One of Iraq's justifications for conquering Kuwait in 1990 was the claim, apparently accurate, that Kuwait was "slant-drilling" and taking oil underground from Iraq's side of the border.
9. Because the conflicts in these regions are not resolved, each succeeding crisis between the competing states draws greater international attention to the region, further confirming the "regional flashpoint" status. This tautological phenomenon can only be resolved by a mutually a final resolution of the disputed region, either by success in war or by mutual agreement.
10. Although the Nehruvian notion of a secular Indian state is, perhaps, receding in the new Indian domestic climate, it remains a compelling image for some Indian elites. The reluctance of Pakistani elites, both civilian and military, to publicly consider compromise on the Kashmir issue is well documented.
11. "Track Two" discussions of Kashmir occasionally appear to offer promise. No Pakistani regime, however, has ever publicly committed itself to considering a compromise on Kashmir. The closest any regime has come were the secret negotiations at Simla in 1972, which are still disputed by the Pakistanis.
12. The best single volume history of India's nuclear weapons program is George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). See also Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India Pvt Ltd, 2000); and Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).
13. Key scientists involved in that test later suggested that it was actually a test of a weapons design. If it was a weapons design, it is not clear that it was a particularly practical one—debates continue about the yields of all the Indian nuclear tests, and comments after the May

- 11, 1998 test suggest that the fission weapon was a smaller, more easily delivered version of the original test design.
14. Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5 (September/October 1998), pp. 41–52.
15. India's motives for testing in the 1990s are investigated in Deepa M. Ollapolly, "Mixed Motives in India's Search for Nuclear Status," *Asian Survey* Vol. 41, No. 6 (November/December 2001), pp. 925–42.
16. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*, pp. 192–211 for a discussion of these issues.
17. Regarding India's unusual civil-military relationship and strategic culture, see Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies 1947–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), and George Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).
18. Major General Som Dutt, *India and the Bomb*, Adelphi Paper 30 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1966).
19. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p. 296.
20. This is the focus of Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*.
21. See "India's Letter to Clinton on Nuclear Testing," *New York Times*, May 13, 1998 (internet edition: <http://www.nytimes.com/>). On this issue, two other quasi-official documents are of interest. See Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid"; "Paper Laid on the Table of the House on Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy."
22. Even hawkish analysts have difficulty defining a credible Chinese threat to India. While India attempted to use the Chinese threat to justify its 1998 tests, it quickly backed away from this contention. A chapter in an edited volume by one of India's leading hawks fails to present a compelling vision of a Chinese threat. See Ravi Rikhye and Pushpinder Singh, "External Threats and India's Conventional Capabilities: Perspectives till 2010," in Bharat Karnad, ed., *Future Imperilled: India's Security in the 1990s and Beyond* (New Delhi: Viking Books, 1994), pp. 85–98.
23. For an overview, see Timothy D. Hoyt, "Pakistani Nuclear Doctrine and the Dangers of Strategic Myopia," *Asian Survey* Vol. 41, No. 6 (November/December 2001), pp. 956–77; and Zafar Iqbal Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Use Doctrine and Command and Control," in Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 158–81.
24. See Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). Bhutto, the Foreign Minister under President Ayub Khan in the mid-1960s, became the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1972 to 1977, after the independence of Bangladesh.
25. The Pressler Amendment, Section 620E(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, became law in 1985. It required the US President to certify that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear weapon, in order for foreign aid to be distributed. President Reagan so certified during each of his years in office, but with the waning of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the increased evidence of Pakistan's nuclear weaponization, President Bush was unable to certify Pakistan in 1990, and economic and military assistance was suspended.
26. See, for example, Rodney W. Jones and Mark G. McDonough, *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation: A Guide in Maps and Charts*, 1998 with Toby F. Dalton and Gregory D. Koblenz (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998), pp. 131–46.
27. Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), pp. 78–82, discusses the conflicted US policy towards Pakistan from 1980 to 1986.

28. There are discrepancies in the histories of Pakistani nuclear developments in the 1980s. See Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 202.
29. Seymour Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge," *New Yorker*, March 29, 1993, pp. 68–73.
30. "Pakistan Can Build One Nuclear Device, Official Says," *Washington Post*, February 7, 1992.
31. Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Use Doctrine and Command and Control," p. 159.
32. See Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
33. See Jones, *Pakistan*, pp. 187–91 for reports that Pakistan feared a preemptive strike on at least four occasions, 1983–98.
34. Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, pp. 252–59.
35. For details, see Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation*; Kanti P. Bajpai et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: ACDIS, June 1995). A very interesting work is Ravi Rikhye's *The War That Never Was: The Story of India's Strategic Failures* (New Delhi: Chanakya Public 1988), which points out the serious flaws in Indian military planning while simultaneously rejecting the possibility of a Pakistani nuclear capability.
36. This report is cited in Rikhye, *The War That Never Was*, p. 195.
37. Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 92–93.
38. Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 206.
39. The nuclear deployment report comes from Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge," pp. 55–73, and is repeated in William E. Burrows and Robert Windrem, *Critical Mass* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 60–90. It is also supported by Weaver, *Pakistan*, p. 206. According to the US ambassadors in New Delhi and Islamabad at the time, however, the U.S. government was unaware of any nuclear deployment, or even of the evacuation of nuclear materials from Kahuta. See Michael Krepon and Mishi Faruquee, eds., *Conflict Prevention and Confidence-Building Measures in South Asia: The 1990 Crisis*, Occasional Paper no. 17 (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, April 1994).
40. "Kashmir Issue May Draw a Summit Plea," *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1990.
41. See "The Prime Minister's Announcement of India's Three Underground Nuclear Tests on May 11, 1998," at [www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/vajpayee1198.htm](http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/vajpayee1198.htm); and "Press Conference (Dr. R. Chidambaram (RC), Chairman, AEC & Secretary, DAE; Dr. A.P. J. Abdul Kalam (K), Scientific Adviser to Raksha Mantri and Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development; Dr. Anil Kakodkar, Director, BARC; Dr. K. Santhanam, Chief Advisor (Technologies), DRDO) May 17, 1998," at [www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980500-conf.htm](http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/980500-conf.htm); and "Press Release on India's Nuclear Tests, May 11 and 13, 1998," at [www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/prmay1198.htm](http://www.fas.org/news/india/1998/05/prmay1198.htm).
42. Reactor grade plutonium is typically 65–70% Pu-239, and has other isotopes that lower the explosive yield of the nuclear reaction. However, weapons using reactor grade plutonium have been successfully tested by the United States, and George Perkovich believes one of India's "low-yield" tests used non-weapons-grade plutonium. George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 428–29.
43. "Pakistan completes the current series of nuclear tests... Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shamshad Ahmed's statement at the Press Conference in Islamabad on 30 May 1998," at [www.fas.org/news/pakistan/1998/05/980530-gop.htm](http://www.fas.org/news/pakistan/1998/05/980530-gop.htm).
44. For a discussion, see Hilary Synnott, *The Causes and Consequences of South Asia's Nuclear Tests*, Adelphi Paper 332 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999), pp. 54–56, and Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), pp. 519–22.

45. The stability—instability paradox was first identified in by Glenn Snyder, “The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror,” in Paul Seabury, ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), pp. 184–201, and is discussed in Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 19–22. See also Michael Krepon and Chris Gagne, eds., *The Stability-Instability Paradox: Nuclear Weapons and Brinkmanship in South Asia* (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, June 2001).
46. On February 10, 1999, Gen. Malik said “Having crossed the nuclear threshold does not mean that a conventional war is out.” John Cherian, “The Political and Diplomatic Background,” *Frontline* Vol. 16, No. 12 (June 5–18, 1999), [www.the-hindu.com/frontline/fl1612/1612080.htm](http://www.the-hindu.com/frontline/fl1612/1612080.htm).
47. *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: SAGE, December 15, 1999), pp. 197–99.
48. Statement by General Musharraf dated April 12, 1999, cited in *From Surprise to Reckoning*, p. 242. See also his remarks to the Pakistan Military Academy in “Pak Defence Strong, Says Army Chief,” *The Independent*, April 19, 1999.
49. Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, and Jamison Jo Medby, *Conflict Under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis*, MR-1450-USCA (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001); *From Surprise to Reckoning*; Major General Y. Bahl, *Kargil Blunder: Pakistan's Plight, India's Victory* (New Delhi: Manas, 2000); Praveen Swami, *The Kargil War* (New Delhi: Left Word Press, rev. ed. 2000).
50. Indian military plans, in fact, *always* viewed the option of infiltration or tribal and other paramilitary forces as equivalent to an invasion by Pakistani regulars. “In the event of such actions, Indian troops in Kashmir would seek to contain the opposing forces while the main Indian field army made a determined and rapid advance towards Lahore or Sialkot”—across the international border. Lorne Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defense Policies 1947–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 36–37.
51. Vertical escalation refers to increasing the use of available military means in an effort to reverse the direction of a conflict. India did resort to some vertical escalation, particularly the commitment of Indian air force strike aircraft. However, it conspicuously limited these strikes, keeping them on the Indian side of the Line of Control and relying primarily on precision strikes rather than indiscriminate bombing of Pakistani positions. Horizontal escalation refers to broadening the geographic or geopolitical scope of the conflict, either by engaging new allies in the fighting or by opening new theaters of combat. India deliberately chose *not* to expand the geography of the conflict, either by strikes across the LoC or by attacks across the international border.
52. See Bruce Riedel, *American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House*, Policy Paper Series 2002 (Philadelphia, PA: Center for the Advanced Study of India, 2002), for reports that Pakistan prepared “nuclear tipped missiles”; and Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace*, 437 for reports that India placed its nuclear arsenal at “Readiness State 3”—ready to be mated with Prithvi and Agni missiles and Mirage 2000 aircraft for delivery.
53. See the Draft Nuclear Doctrine, August 17, 1999, at [www.indianembassy.org/policy/CTBT/nuclear\\_doctrine\\_aug\\_17\\_1999.html](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/CTBT/nuclear_doctrine_aug_17_1999.html).
54. “Fernandes Unveils ‘Limited War’ Doctrine,” *The Hindu*, January 25, 2000; “When Words Hurt: No Limits on a ‘Limited War,’” *Asiaweek* Vol. 26, No. 12, March 31, 2000.
55. Hoyt, “Pakistani Nuclear Doctrine,” pp. 964–66.
56. “Nothing Called Limited War: Sattar,” *Times of India*, May 2, 2000.
57. “‘Great Danger’ of War with India: Sattar,” *Times of India*, March 14, 2002.
58. See Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, pp. 135–38; Weaver, *Pakistan*, pp. 40–42.
59. “Pak Would Be Wiped Out If It Uses Nuclear Bomb: BJP,” *Hindustan Times*, December 26, 2001.
60. “Military Option if Diplomacy Fails,” *The Hindu*, January 4, 2002

61. "Army Ready for War, Says Chief," *The Statesman* (India), January 12, 2002. According to reports, the General remarked that if Pakistan used nuclear weapons against Indian soldiers on the battlefield, "the continuation of the existence of Pakistan as a nation would be in doubt."
62. "India Tests Missile, Stirring a Region Already on Edge," *The New York Times*, January 25, 2002.
63. An interesting study of this is Gaurav Kampani, "Placing the Indo-Pakistani Standoff in Perspective," available at [cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/pdfs/indopak.pdf](http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/pdfs/indopak.pdf).
64. "India Builds Up Forces as Bush Urges Calm," *New York Times*, December 30, 2001. This report cites Pakistani intelligence officials as having identified 23 Indian divisions on the border, in addition to 600 aircraft. India moved troops from the border with China (III Corps) as well.
65. "India Fully Prepared to Meet Exigencies, Says Jaswant," *The Hindu*, December 24, 2001.
66. "India's Landmines: A Bitter Harvest for Farmers," *New York Times*, January 4, 2002.
67. "A Unique Army Exercise," *The Hindu*, December 30, 2001. An earlier exercise in May 2001 had tested similar capabilities. See "Heat and Dust: Exercise Poorna Vijay," *Strategic Affairs* (September 1, 2001).
68. "Missiles of Military Diplomacy," *Telegraph (India)*, December 27, 2001.
69. Rahul Bedi, "A Strike Staunched," *Frontline* Vol. 19, No. 12 (June 8–21, 2002).
70. One estimate suggests that the cost for Pakistan was as great as 30% of its annual budget. See Jasjit Singh, "December 13: A Year After," *Indian Express*, December 16, 2002. Indian costs were reported as 70 million rupees per day—roughly \$750 million for ten months. See "Border Stand-Off Cost India RS 7-Cr A Day," *Hindustan Times*, October 19, 2002, and Rajesh Basrur, "Coercive Diplomacy in A Nuclear Environment: The December 13 Crisis" (manuscript in author's possession), p. 13 n. 85.
71. "Pakistan's Arrest of Militant is 'Step Forward', India Says," *New York Times*, January 1, 2002.
72. "India's Leader Continues Accusing Pakistan of Terror," *New York Times*, December 30, 2001.
73. Even after the summer crisis, President Musharraf admitted that militants continued to enter Kashmir from Pakistani territory. "Militants Still Entering India, Says Musharraf," *London Daily Telegraph*, August 21, 2002.
74. Rahul Bedi, "The Military Dynamics," *Frontline* Vol. 19, No. 12 (June 8–21, 2002).
75. "Pakistan Won't Rule Out Use of Nuclear Arms if Attacked," *Media Corporation of Singapore Pte Ltd. (Channel News Asia)*, May 29, 2002 (accessed through Lexis-Nexis).
76. "At UN, Pakistan Defends First-Strike Nuclear Policy," *Agence France Presse*, May 29, 2002.
77. "Pakistan Asks U.N. Council For Action On Kashmir," *New York Times*, May 30, 2002.
78. "Transcript: Powell Warns Against Military Action By India, Pakistan," May 31, 2002, at [usembassy.state.gov/islamabad/wwwhindopak02053104.html](http://usembassy.state.gov/islamabad/wwwhindopak02053104.html); and "Chambers Flay US Decision to Evacuate Citizens," *Financial Express*, May 31, 2002.
79. Seymour Hersh, "Watching the Warheads: The Risks to Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal," *The New Yorker*, November 5, 2001, available at [www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?011105fa\\_FACT](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?011105fa_FACT).
80. Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 303.
81. See, e.g., W. Lawrence Prabhakar and Gopalji Malviya, "The Morning After," *Indian Express*, June 9, 2002, which argues that "South Asia's doomsday however can be prevented and should be averted with the timely and decisive US action that should invoke its well decided contingency plan...to disarm the nukes and target the storage facilities." The fact that at the height of the crisis, the US chose to recommend the evacuation of US citizens rather than "invoke" a preemptive strike should suggest the unreliability of this option.
82. "A US Concern: Pakistani's [sic] Arsenal," *Boston Globe*, August 16, 2002.

83. See Husain Haqqani, "Pakistan's Endgame in Kashmir"; and Amitabh Mattoo, "India's 'Potential' Endgame in Kashmir."
84. See Jonah Blank, "Kashmir: All Tactics, No Strategy"; and Praveen Swami, "Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in Theory and Practice."
85. See Carole McGranahan, "Kashmir and Tibet: Comparing Conflicts, States, and Solutions"; and Devin T. Hagerty, "US Policy and the Kashmir Dispute: Prospects for Resolution."
86. India finally created a Nuclear Command Authority in January 2003, four and a half years after its nuclear tests. "Nuclear Command Authority Comes Into Being," *The Hindu*, January 5, 2003. According to another report, the announcement of the Nuclear Command Authority was the result of India's failure to compel Pakistan to back down in 2002 due to both conventional and nuclear weakness. "N-Option Seeks to Allay Army's Fears," *Times of India*, January 6, 2003.
87. For example, prominent Indian elites have suggested that the "No First Use" policy be revisited in response to the recent crises. "Ex-Army Chief Critical of Defence Strategy," *The Hindu*, January 24, 2003.
88. The surprising admissions of Indian military leaders, particularly in the army, undercut the efforts of the Indian political leadership to portray (and take advantage) of a condition of escalation dominance. According to defense sources, the Indian conventional combat ratio advantage declined from 1.75:1 in 1971, to 1.56:1 in 1990, and is now only 1.22:1. "Army Seeks Swift Modernisation to Counter Pak," *Times of India*, April 3, 2003.
89. See, e.g., "US Refusal to Admit Iraq-Pak Similarities Unacceptable," *Times of India*, April 14, 2003. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (September 2002), which clearly states that the US government will not shrink from preemptive or preventive war if vital interests are at stake, can be found at [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf).
90. A change in Indian nuclear policy could also *exacerbate* the strain on defense resources, if it is not met with sufficient increases in the defense budget. Like the US in the 1950s, India could be forced to prioritize between nuclear and conventional modernization.
91. These were, unofficially, outlined by General Kidwai, commander of the Strategic Plans Division, in "Nuclear Safety, Nuclear Stability and Nuclear Strategy in Pakistan," *A Concise Report of a Visit by Landau Network—Centro Volta* (January 2002) available at [lxmi.mi.infn.it/~landnet/](http://lxmi.mi.infn.it/~landnet/). The lead investigators on this project were Professor Paolo Cotta-Ramuson and Professor Maurizio Martellini.
92. "NCA to Decide on Use of N-Weapons," *DAWN*, January 7, 2003. This report emphasizes that Pakistan continues to rely on minimal nuclear deterrence.
93. This point is drawn out in detail in Michael Ryan Kraig, "The Political and Strategic Imperatives of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," *India Review* Vol. 2, No. 1 (January 2003) pp. 35–38.
94. For an interesting perspective on the differences between Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani deterrence, see Kraig, "The Political and Strategic Imperatives of Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia."
95. See, for instance, the comments of Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. "The assurance given by Pakistan on the issue of cross-border terrorism remains unfulfilled," Kalam said. "Infrastructure of terrorist groups remains intact in Pakistan." AFP—Feb 17, 2003 "Pakistan Reneging on Pledges to End 'Terror': Indian President," [sg.news.yahoo.com/030217/1/37vqn.html](http://sg.news.yahoo.com/030217/1/37vqn.html); and "Army Bracing for Spurt in Infiltration," *Times of India*, April 14, 2003.
96. For an extreme piece of nuclear rhetoric, see the statement of Minister of Defense George Fernandes: "Pakistan's leadership should not toy with the idea of using nuclear weapons against India. We can take a nuclear bomb or two but if we retaliate, Pakistan will be completely wiped out." "One Bomb From Us Can Destroy Pak: Fernandes," *Times of India*, January 8, 2003. India expelled five Pakistani diplomats for providing funds to a Kashmiri insurgent group in early February, 2003, and Pakistan expelled Indian Embassy staff in

retaliation. Press Trust of India, "India, Pak Grant Visas to New Dy High Commissioners," February 18, 2003.